

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 134334
ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 /011 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/EGY:KEHONAN:SEB
APPROVED BY NEA/EGY:GRBEYER
NEA/RA:SHOLLY
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P 101425Z JUN 77
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 134334

FROM NEA/EGY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR EG

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS EVALUATION PLAN FOR EGYPT

1. AS DISCUSSED IN PREVIOUS TELEGRAM FROM NEA BUREAU,
-----WE HAVE BEEN ASKED TO DRAFT ACTION PROGRAMS IN
THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD FOR EGYPT. THE FIRST DRAFT OF SUCH
A PROGRAM FOLLOWS AND WE WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY'S COM-
MENTS, ADDITIONS, OR REVISIONS. BECAUSE WE ARE OPERATING
UNDER STRICT DEADLINES, WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR COMMENTS
NO LATER THAN JUNE 21.

2. A. CONDITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN EGYPT
RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON

UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF PRESIDENT SADAT, EGYPT HAS MADE
MARKED IMPROVEMENTS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD. THIS HAS
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BEEN PARTICULARLY EVIDENT IN THE GROWING RESPECT FOR THE
INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON AND FOR DUE PROCESS. THE NASSER
REGIME IN EGYPT COULD REASONABLY BE CHARACTERIZED AS A
POLICE STATE. THERE WERE FREQUENT ABUSES OF INDIVIDUAL
RIGHTS, INCLUDING ARBITRARY ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT WITHOUT
TRIAL. THIS HAS CEASED IN EGYPT AND THOSE WHO HAVE SUFFERED

FROM THESE ABUSES HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TAKE THEIR CASES TO
THE COURTS FOR REDRESS. TORTURE AND OTHER CRUEL, INHUMANE
PUNISHMENT HAS BEEN FORBIDDEN AND, TO THE BEST OF OUR

KNOWLEDGE, NO LONGER OCCURS. DEFENDANTS, REGARDLESS OF THE NATURE OF THE OFFENSE, ARE GIVEN DUE PROCESS AND EQUAL TREATMENT UNDER THE LAW. THE SADAT GOVERNMENT HAS MADE STRONG EFFORTS TO REESTABLISH THE RULE OF LAW AND TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH A FAIR TRIAL IS ASSURED. MOST TRIALS ARE NOW OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND THIS TREND PROMISES TO CONTINUE.

AFTER THE JANUARY 1977 RIOTS, SOME INDIVIDUALS WERE ARRESTED ON CHARGES OF INCITING TO RIOT AND SUBVERSION. ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT THESE PERSONS ARE RECEIVING DUE PROCESS.

. RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES.

THE ONLY FAIR WAY TO LOOK AT THE STATE OF POLITICAL LIBERTIES IN EGYPT IS TO COMPARE IT WITH THE NASSER ERA. THE TREND UNDER THE SADAT REGIME HAS BEEN TOWARDS INCREASING POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION. WHILE THIS PROCESS WAS SET BACK SLIGHTLY IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE SEVERE JANUARY RIOTS, IT REMAINS CLEAR THAT PRESIDENT SADAT IS PERSONALLY COMMITTED TO LIBERALIZING THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN EGYPT AS QUICKLY AS HE JUDGES IS POSSIBLE. POLITICAL DISSENT IS TOLERATED TO A GREATER DEGREE THAN EVER BEFORE, THOUGH THERE ARE LIMITATIONS ON PUBLIC DISSENT. SADAT HAS MOVED AWAY FROM THE ONE-PARTY SYSTEM WHICH HAD BEEN IN EXISTENCE
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SINCE THE REVOLUTION OF 1952, FIRST BY SETTING UP THREE GROUPS WITHIN THE ARAB SOCIALIST UNION AND LATER TRANSFORMING THESE THREE GROUPS INTO SEPARATE POLITICAL PARTIES REPRESENTING THE LEFT, RIGHT, AND CENTER (THE GOVERNMENT). THESE PARTIES ARE NOT FULLY REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL SHADES OF OPINION IN EGYPT, BUT THEY DO PRESENT A FAIRLY BROAD RANGE OF THE EGYPTIAN POLITICAL SPECTRUM. BOTH THE MARXIST LEFT AND THE EXTREME RELIGIOUS RIGHT ARE FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES EXCLUDED FROM PARTICIPATION IN EGYPTIAN POLITICAL LIFE, THOUGH THESE VIEWS ARE REPRESENTED IN THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY BY SEVERAL MEMBERS WHO WERE ELECTED AS;AND HAVE REMAINED INDEPENDENTS.

EGYPT IS A NON-RACIAL SOCIETY WITH COMPLETE FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION. THERE HAVE OCCASIONALLY BEEN ALLEGATIONS THAT THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT DISCRIMINATES AGAINST ITS LARGE COPTIC CHRISTIAN MINORITY. WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN SOME INDIVIDUALLY INSPIRED ACTS OF VIOLENCE DIRECTED AGAINST CHRISTIANS, THERE HAS BEEN NO EVIDENCE OF OFFICIALLY INSPIRED ACTS OF RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION. COPTIC

CHRISTIANS ARE FULLY INTEGRATED INTO ALL FACETS OF EGYPTIAN LIFE AND HOLD MANY LEADING POSITIONS IN THE GOVERNMENT. PRESIDENT SADAT HAS PUBLICLY CONDEMNED ANY ATTEMPTS TO

STIR UP RELIGIOUS DISCORD.

NEWSPAPERS IN EGYPT ARE STATE-OWNED AND ARE EXPECTED TO EXERCISE SELF-CENSORSHIP. CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT IS PERMITTED WITHIN LIMITS. THOSE WHO FLAGRANTLY VIOLATE THOSE UNWRITTEN GUIDELINES ARE REMOVED FROM THEIR JOBS. MOST EGYPTIAN JOURNALISTS ARE WELL AWARE OF WHAT THEY CAN AND CANNOT SAY, AND THERE ARE FEW CHALLENGES TO THE GUIDELINES.

AFTER THE JANUARY RIOTS, THE GOVERNMENT LIMITED THE RIGHT OF ASSEMBLY AND INSTITUTED STRICT PENALTIES FOR THOSE WHO
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STRIKE OR DEMONSTRATE. THERE HAVE BEEN NO STRIKES OR DISTURBANCES SINCE THEN SO IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO SEE HOW THESE REGULATIONS ARE ENFORCED IN PRACTICE.

EGYPTIANS ARE FREE TO TRAVEL ANYWHERE IN EGYPT AND DO NOT REQUIRE PERMISSION TO MOVE ABOUT THE COUNTRY. THEY ARE FREE TO EMIGRATE AND TO TRAVEL TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES, EXCEPT ISRAEL.

EGYPT HAS UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE FOR THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY. CAMPAIGNS FOR SEATS IN THE ASSEMBLY ARE REASONABLY FREE AND VERY LIVELY. THE PRESIDENT IS SELECTED BY MAJORITY VOTE IN THE ASSEMBLY. THE ASSEMBLY'S CHOICE IS THEN CONFIRMED IN A NATIONWIDE REFERENDUM.

4. RECENT TRENDS IN GOVERNMENT POLICIES RELATING TO THE FULFILLMENT OF BASIC NEEDS FOR FOOD, HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION.

EGYPT IS AN EXTREMELY POOR COUNTRY, WHICH IS HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON FOREIGN AID TO STAY AFLOAT. THE CONTINUING MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT HAS NECESSITATED THE MAINTENANCE OF A LARGE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, WITH MILITARY EXPENDITURES CLAIMING ABOUT 25 OF GNP. THIS SITUATION IS NOT APT TO CHANGE UNTIL THERE IS A FINAL SETTLEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT HEAVILY SUBSIDIZES BASIC COMMODITY GOODS FOR THE POOR. THE U.S. AND OTHER DONOR NATIONS HAVE URGED THE EGYPTIANS TO SEEK ALTERNATIVES TO THESE SUBSIDIES. THE GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTED TO DO THIS AND THE END RESULT WAS THE JANUARY RIOTS. ANY IMPROVEMENT IN HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION WILL DEPEND ON THE ABILITY OF FOREIGN DONORS TO FINANCE THE NECESSARY IMPROVEMENTS. EGYPT IS HEAVILY IN DEBT AND DOES NOT HAVE THE MONEY TO

FINANCE ITS OWN DEVELOPMENT.

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CORRUPTION ----- EXISTS IN EGYPT, BUT IT DOES NOT
SUBSTANTIALLY DIVERT RESOURCES FROM THE POOR TO THE ELITE.

5. THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT IS QUITE PROUD OF ITS HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD. THE LIBERALIZATION OF THE NATION'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE HAS BEEN A CONSCIOUS POLICY OF PRESIDENT SADAT, AND IT IS AN ACHIEVEMENT WHICH HE MISSES NO OPPORTUNITY TO MENTION PUBLICLY. HE IS QUITE EARNEST IN HIS DESIRE TO BRING ABOUT A BETTER LIFE FOR THE EGYPTIAN PEOPLE AND TO CREATE A TRULY FREE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK. EVEN THE JANUARY RIOTS, WHICH CAUGHT HIM BY SURPRIZE, HAVE NOT LESSENED HIS COMMITMENT TO HIS LIBERALIZATION POLICIES.

THE RESTRICTIONS WHICH WERE ENACTED AFTER THE RIOTS WERE JUSTIFIED ON SECURITY GROUNDS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS CLAIMED THAT COMMUNIST AGITATORS WERE DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR INITIATING THE DISTURBANCES AND FANNING THE FLAMES OF PUBLIC DISCONTENT. THIS CLAIM IS NOT ENTIRELY CONVINCING BECAUSE THOUGH THE COMMUNISTS TRIED TO EXPLOIT THE SITUATION THROUGH VIOLENCE FOR THEIR OWN ENDS, THE DEMONSTRATIONS INITIALLY WERE AN APPARENTLY GENUINE EXPRESSION OF THE PEOPLE'S DISSATISFACTION WITH THE ABRUPT INCREASES IN FOOD PRICES. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE RIOTS ARE AN INDICATION OF A THREAT TO THE SECURITY OF THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT, THOUGH THEY DO SUGGEST A LATENT THREAT IS EXTANT.

THE CONTINUING ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE MILITATES AGAINST COMPLETE POLITICAL FREEDOM IN EGYPT. THE GOVERNMENT IS UNLIKELY TO PERMIT COMPLETE DISSENT AS LONG AS THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY OF WAR WITH ISRAEL. THIS IS A DEEP-SEATED FEAR ON THE PART OF EGYPT.

6. SINCE THE SADAT GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN OFFICE, HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS IN EGYPT HAVE NOT OCCASIONED OUTSIDE INVESTIGATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.

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7. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN EGYPT WARRANTS A STRONG USG ACTION. THE OVERALL HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION HAS BEEN VERY ENCOURAGING AND THE RELATIVELY FEW NEGATIVE ASPECTS WOULD NOT APPEAR AMENABLE TO CHANGE, INDEED SOME OF THESE ASPECTS MAY REMAIN UNTIL THERE IS A FINAL MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT. THE HERITAGE OF A COLONIAL PAST MAKES EGYPT VERY RESISTENT AND SENSITIVE TO ANY ATTEMPT BY A FOREIGN, WESTERN STATE TO INTERFERE IN WHAT MOST EGYPTIANS REGARD AS A PURELY INTERNAL MATTER.

THERE ARE ALSO NO REPORTED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN EGYPT WHICH ARE SO SEVERE AS TO MAKE U.S. ACTION NECESSARY. WE HAVE ENCOURAGED AND COMMENDED THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION POLICIES OF THE SADAT GOVERNMENT AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO, BUT IT MUST BE NOTED THAT OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH EGYPT HAVE FLOURISHED IN RECENT YEARS, IN PART BECAUSE WE DID NOT ATTEMPT TO INTERFERE IN EGYPTIAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND DID NOT TRY TO FORCE THE EGYPTIANS TO TAKE ACTIONS WHICH THEY VIEWED AS CONTRARY TO THEIR OWN NATIONAL INTERESTS.

WITHIN THAT CONTEXT AND GIVEN THE OVER-RIDING IMPORTANCE OF OUR CONTINUED GOOD RELATIONS WITH EGYPT TO THE SUCCESS OF OUR EFFORT TO BRING ABOUT A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT TO THE MIDDLE EAST DISPUTE, OUR SCOPE FOR ACTION IN EGYPT IS VERY LIMITED. OUR MOST IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE SHOULD BE TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION POLICIES OF THE SADAT GOVERNMENT. GIVEN THE APPARENT COMMITMENT OF PRESIDENT SADAT TO THESE POLICIES, WE BELIEVE THERE WILL CONTINUE TO BE A FAVORABLE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN EGYPT AS LONG AS SADAT REMAINS IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION THERE. OUR AID PROGRAM IS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN SHOWING OUR SUPPORT FOR SADAT AND WE SHOULD ALSO FOCUS ON THE AID PROGRAM'S POSSIBILITIES FOR IMPROVING THE CONFIDENTIAL

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LOT OF EGYPT'S POOR. OUR FOOD ASSISTANCE AND POPULATION CONTROL PROGRAMS ARE STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION BUT WE SHOULD TAKE CONSIDERATIONS OF ECONOMIC EQUITY INTO ACCOUNT WHEN MAPPING OUT A LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR EGYPT. IN ADDITION, WE SHOULD CONTINUE OUR EFFORT TO EXPLAIN OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY TO INFLUENTIAL SEGMENTS OF EGYPTIAN SOCIETY. THE EMBASSY HAS ALREADY MADE STRONG EFFORTS IN THIS REGARD AND WE BELIEVE THEIR EFFORTS WOULD BE REINFORCED BY SENDING A DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN SPOKESMAN IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD TO GIVE A DETAILED PRESENTATION OF OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE WORLD. THIS INDIVIDUAL SHOULD BE GIVEN A WIDE EXPOSURE TO SELECTED TARGET GROUPS IN EGYPT, BOTH PRIVATE AND OFFICIAL. HE SHOULD BE AN ARTICULATE PROPONENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND SHOULD BE WELL PREPARED TO ANSWER THE TYPE OF TOUGH QUESTIONS WELL-INFORMED EGYPTIAN AUDIENCES ARE LIKELY TO ASK. AS A COMPLEMENT TO THIS EFFORT WE SHOULD CONSIDER MAKING USE OF SOME OF OUR INTERNATIONAL VISITOR GRANTS FOR EGYPT TO BRING SOME EGYPTIANS TO THE UNITED STATES FOR A PROGRAM FOCUSED MAINLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS. THIS COULD INCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY WHO ARE INTERESTED IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND ALSO JOURNALISTS AND OTHERS WHO WOULD DERIVE SOME BENEFIT FROM EXPOSURE TO A PROGRAM OF THIS TYPE.

8. EGYPTIANS AND THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN ON THE

WHOLE VERY SUPPORTIVE OF OUR NEW HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY. THERE IS ONE PRINCIPAL REASON FOR THIS AND THAT IS THAT THE EGYPTIANS LOOK AT THESE POLICIES IN AN ARAB-ISRAELI CONTEXT, ONE IN WHICH ISRAEL IS VIEWED AS A TRANSGRESSOR OF ARAB HUMAN RIGHTS. THE EGYPTIANS DO NOT VIEW OUR POLICY AS HAVING ANY SUBSTANTIVE APPLICATION IN THEIR OWN CASE. FOR THAT REASON, IT IS RELATIVELY EASY FOR THEM TO APPLAUD OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY. BUT THEY ARE ALSO UNLIKELY TO ENDORSE OUR POLICY VERY ARDENTLY, BECAUSE OF OUR STRONG SUPPORT FOR AN ISRAEL WHICH THEY VIEW AS A CONFIDENTIAL

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BLATANT VIOLATOR OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. THIS SEEMS TO BE A VIEW HELD BY MOST SEGMENTS OF THE EGYPTIAN POPULATION WITH WHOM WE ARE IN CONTACT. ANY ACTIONS WE TOOK IN EGYPT IN SUPPORT OF OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY WOULD BE AFFECTED BY THIS PERCEPTION.

9. MOST EGYPTIANS APPEAR TO BE SUPPORTIVE OF THE POLICIES OF LIBERALIZATION CARRIED OUT BY THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT. ANY DISCREET ACTIONS WE TOOK IN SUPPORT OF THAT POLICY WOULD BE VIEWED WITH FAVOR BY MOST EGYPTIANS. HOWEVER, ANYTHING THAT SMACKED OF POLITICAL INTERFERENCE IN THEIR INTERNAL AFFAIRS WOULD CREATE A STRONG BACKLASH AGAINST THE UNITED STATES.

10A.WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD IN EGYPT JUSTIFIES STRONG U.S. ACTIONS, BEYOND THE RELATIVELY MODEST PROGRAM OUTLINED ABOVE, WHICH IS UNLIKELY TO SERIOUSLY IMPACT ON OUR OTHER INTERESTS IN EGYPT. ANY BLATANTLY ASSERTIVE PROGRAM WOULD HAVE ADVERSE EFFECTS ON OUR POSITION IN EGYPT AND CONSEQUENTLY ON THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORT.

10B.BECAUSE OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI PRISM THROUGH WHICH THE EGYPTIANS LOOK AT HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, THE EGYPTIANS ARE UNLIKELY TO BE VERY SUPPORTIVE OF ACTIONS WE TAKE IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. THE EGYPTIANS ARE QUITE LIKELY TO ADD CONDEMNATIONS OF ISRAEL TO EVERY RESOLUTION WE TRY TO SPONSOR AND THEIR STRONG INFLUENCE BOTH IN THE ARAB AND NON-ALIGNED BLOCS WILL GAIN THEM A GREAT DEAL OF SUPPORT. THE EGYPTIANS HAVE ALREADY EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT OUR EFFORTS TO RAISE HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS IN WORLD FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS. SHOULD WE CONTINUE IN THESE EFFORTS, IT IS VERY POSSIBLE THAT THEY WILL MAKE USE OF THIS POLICY TO GARNER SUPPORT FOR AN EFFORT TO DENY LOANS TO ISRAEL ON HUMAN RIGHTS GROUNDS. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 22-Sep-1999 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, HUMAN RIGHTS, PROGRAMS (PROJECTS)
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 10-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE134334
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA/EGY:KEHONAN:SEB
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 GDS
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: D770208-0075
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197706110/baaaewds.tel
Line Count: 323
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ed219e73-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2013871
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HUMAN RIGHTS EVALUATION PLAN FOR EGYPT
TAGS: PFOR, TECH, SHUM, US, EG
To: CAIRO
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ed219e73-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009